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TWO ADDRESSES

DELIVERED IN THE

RICHMOND STREET CHURCH, TORONTO

DURING THE SITTING OF THE

Canada Wesleyan Methodist Conference

IN JUNE, 1869.

BY

W. MORLEY PUNSHON, M.A.,

President of the Conference.

TORONTO :

WESLEYAN CONFERENCE OFFICE,

KING STREET EAST.

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The EDITH *and* LORNE PIERCE
COLLECTION *of* CANADIANA



Queen's University at Kingston

20/50/42 Monday
MUTUAL OBLIGATION; *2.7*

OR,

THE DUTIES OF THE PULPIT AND THE PEW
TO EACH OTHER,

AND OF BOTH TO GOD.

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RESOLUTION OF CONFERENCE.

RESOLVED,—“That our President, the REV. W. MORLEY PUNSHON, M.A., be respectfully requested to prepare for the press, for general circulation, in Tract form, his Charge to the Society last Friday evening, and his Charge to the Ministry on Sabbath morning, thus embracing the mutual duties of the Ministry and Society, the evangelical principles of Ministerial and Lay co-operation in the great work of spreading the truth and holiness of the Scriptures over the land.”

IN compliance with the wishes of those to whose judgment I defer, and in the humble hope of the great Master's following blessing, I commit these addresses to print. I am conscious, not only how far they are below the gravity of the occasion which demanded them, but how far they have failed to reach my own ideal of what they were to be. I feel that I have but scattered crumbs, where I would fain have spread a table ; but if the Lord wills, the basketful can grow into a banquet, on which thousands may be fed.

W. MORLEY PUNSHON.

CHARGE

ADDRESSED TO

FIFTEEN YOUNG MINISTERS

ON THEIR

ORDINATION TO THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY IN CONNEXION WITH
THE WESLEYAN METHODIST CHURCH IN CANADA,

On *SUNDAY, June 6th, 1869.*

LUKE xii. 42, 43.

“Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.”

“WHAT I say unto one, I say unto all, Watch.” This is the burden of this chapter’s message, impressed in many varieties of homely and solemn illustration: by the certainty of the last revelation, by the ever-watchful providence of God, by the rich man doomed amidst his dreams of wealth, by the servants waiting for their master from the wedding, by the good man’s vigilance when the thief is stealthy and nigh. In their original utterance there seemed a doubt whether these were general warnings, addressed to the whole church, or whether they were applied especially to the witnesses whom Christ had chosen; and Peter—spokesman, perhaps, of the unuttered thought

of others—asked the question, “Lord speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?” Our Lord answers in the words of the text,—words which, while they assume the church’s obligation to watchfulness to be not less binding, fasten upon the ministers of Christ a responsibility commended by loftier sanctions, and involving graver issues; so that if it behoves a believer to be watchful, and faithful, and wise, upon the minister there is a double necessity; and that he, if he overcome and be approved, is the heir of a sublimer recompense, and if he fail and be condemned—of a more appalling doom.

Amongst the many passages which bear upon ministerial character and service, I have selected this on which to ask your attention at this very interesting and very solemn crisis in your lives. To you it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the present hour. The hopes and anxieties of years are crowded into it. If you have thought of it rightly, it has been a burden upon your souls, an occasion for searching of heart, a time whose approach has stirred the depths of your being to watchfulness, weeping, and prayer. This hour, for you, is the central hour of your life. All the past has converged to it; all the future starts from it. It compresses the obligations of time; it is charged with the destinies of eternity. In the presence of the God whom you have sworn to serve,—in the presence of Christian people, whose wealth is in your character and usefulness, and to some of whom you may

have to minister the word of life,—in the presence of watching angels, and of glorified spirits, dear to some of you, who look down with loving eyes from the reward,—in the presence, it may be, of scoffers who deride your calling, and of adversaries, both earthly and spiritual, who watch for the halting of your feet,—you are here to take upon you the vows of the Christian Ministry, at once the noblest profession and the most solemn responsibility upon earth. It is a duty of my position to counsel and to cheer you,—to remind you of the character which it behoves you to attain, and to stimulate you with the hope of the recompense which awaits your toil. I come to this task under the constraint of office, having over you the melancholy advantage of years, but sad with a strong sense of short-coming in my own soul. With lofty conceptions of the ideal of ministerial character, and a sincere love of it, and an earnest purpose for its attainment, I speak to you, “not as those who have already attained.” I have to urge you to become what I am not, but am only striving to be; I can but indicate the glory of which I have caught only the faint and distant radiance; I can but point you to the pure bright summit, from the far slopes up which I am painfully climbing. If my counsels are shorn of their authority by this confession, give me credit for that sympathy with yourselves which may be an element of power instead. Listen, not to the teacher of unapproachable sanctity, but to the *brother* in experience, in infirmity, in struggle, in desire. The standard is the same, although

we fail to reach it. Pressed beneath the same sanctions, animated by the same hopes, reliant on the same Almighty arm, "come, and let us reason together" of the minister's character and his reward.

There are various similitudes under which, each in its own aspect of fitness, the office of the ministry is presented; but the ideas of trust and of responsibility are leading and present in them all. The Minister is the Dresser of the vineyard, tending early and late upon the vines; the Fisher of Men, toiling through the dark and in the rain; the Master-builder, charged to see to it that the house is safe and strong; the Shepherd, bound to feed and fold the flock, or to search through the gorge or on the mountains for the one that has wandered astray; the Watchman, earnest and unwearied in the hours when other men slumber; the Ambassador, to whom are confided the honour and the message of the King. In none of these, however, is there a more impressive illustration—a greater blending of trust and tenderness—than when, in the Lord's own words, the Minister is the Steward of the household from which the Lord is absent for a season. You will readily appreciate the fitness of the allusion. The Church is a wide and loving family—a brotherhood united by sacred bonds, by community of interest, and by the love of one common Father. Of this family the Steward has charge. He must provide for its wants and vindicate its honour; he must maintain its rights, preserve its purity

inviolable, and cherish among its members the harmony without which the family compact would be snapped asunder ; he must watch over the health and welfare of the weakest, encourage the timid, and repress the rash ; he must guard equally against excess and against indifference, —against the parsimony which would grudge, and the wastefulness which would spend, all ; he has authority, therefore, but it is to be wielded only in the interest of the family and of the Father, and he must act as under the glances of a living eye, which marks his every movement, and under the pressure of the thought that his Lord may at any moment return and ask for the account of his doings. Now lift all these duties into the region of the spiritual ; think of the family as being a family of souls on their journey to heaven, and seeking their inheritance there ; think that the responsibilities of the stewardship stretch out into eternity ; think that misapprehension of the Steward's obligations, or failure to discharge them aright, may involve loss that is irreparable, and bow down the unfaithful one beneath the terrible guilt of blood ; and then, while in the deepening sense of the awfulness of the office upon which you enter to-day, your humbled souls may well cry, as under a burden, "Who is sufficient for these things?" you will be penetrated with a desire, passionate in its intensity of strength, that when the Master comes you may be able to stand in His presence, "saved" yourselves and "saving them that hear you."

You observe that the two great qualifications which the text implies as necessary to a successful stewardship, are those of *fidelity* and *wisdom*: “Who then is that faithful and wise steward.” The first of these has reference to the disposition of the heart, and the second to the due apportionment of endowment and strength. The first is the active principle, the second the discriminating application of means. In the union of these will be found the complement of the Minister’s qualification, and the sinews of his power.

That you may be thoroughly furnished for your work you must, indeed, have other qualities, upon which I cannot largely dwell. You must have *Knowledge*, garnered stores of the wisdom of the olden time, the best thoughts of the best thinkers, hoarded for mental exchange. You must have *Industry*—a diligence which does not flag, which seizes upon every opportunity, wearied in the toil often, but of the work never. You must have *Courage*, the best shield of faith; the bravery which at all hazards, and in all seasons, will confess the Master, stern in its denunciations of popular vices, bold in its reproofs when rank and riches sin. You must have *Patience*, the hope which waits for God, though the wheels of His chariot tarry, which is not disheartened by months of discouragement and delay, which cheers itself by songs in the night, all through the winter singing of the spring which lies, flower-crowned and fair, beneath the snow. You must have *Meekness*, that you may bear the indifference of the ungodly, and the scoffing of the

profane, enduring, sublimely as your Master, the contradiction of sinners. You must have *Nobleness of Soul*, to lift you above the insolent pettinesses of murmuring, and vanity, and envy ; the rare heroism of the Baptist, willing to decrease so that the loftier Teacher may be exalted and honored. Above all you must have *Charity*—the yearning after souls—the travail in birth for souls ; a divine, tender magnanimity of compassion, akin to that of Moses when he wished himself blotted out of the book for the children of Israel's sake,—akin to that of Christ when he was “straitened” until the accomplishment of his baptism of blood.

All these, in their measure, are comprehended in the fidelity which is the prominent duty of your lives ; but it is to *Faithfulness*, in the full import of the word, that you are exhorted now : “It is required in Stewards that a man be found faithful.” Nothing can compensate for the lack of this. You may have talent, it will not profit ; you may have popularity, that is easily acquired, and if that be all, it is a poor recompense for any man's toil ; you may have an average personal experience, winning manners, and a blameless life, these negative qualities will neither do you nor the world much good ; you may pass through your duties respectably, and have a good report of them that are without, and yet be destitute utterly of the true spirit of your calling, and throb with no heroic passion for saving souls. Oh, think of this ! Burn it into your hearts amid the solemn sanc-

tions of this hour : “ I may be talented, popular, agreeable, blameless in the world’s eye, respectable, scholarly; and yet in the sight of God accursed, because unfaithful, and sent away from the judgment with the brand of the traitor and the felon.” Brethren, for myself and you, I deprecate that doom. I urge you :—

I. *Be faithful in the keeping of your own souls.*—You have already testified, in the presence of the great congregation, that you have experienced, really and consciously, the change of heart, and that you are living in God’s favor, and striving earnestly after the fulness of His image. We do not, knowingly, lay hands upon any who are not thus spiritually alive. The blind cannot lead the blind. Corpses cannot animate the dead. Let me affectionately remind you that in the maintenance of your own inward life consists the secret of your power. Alas for you if you deal in the “cold traffic of unfelt truth;” if languor or worldliness be suffered to eat out the heart of your piety; if you relapse into formality or secret unbelief; if the flame upon the closet-altar burns dimly, or is quenched; if you minister in a service from which your affections are estranged; if the inspirations of the former time are but as a worn-out spell, or an extinct volcano, with no fire in its passionate heart! What of good to the world, or of blessing to the church, can come from the ministry of a man paralyzed in soul?—a man who flaunts upon his brow the shrivelled sym-

bols of his former consecration,—a man whose heart is like the sepulchre on the Resurrection morning—a thing of clothes and spices—but without a Christ. Brethren, be incessant in prayer and watching, I charge you, lest there come upon you this dishonour. Your ordination will not save you from barrenness of soul. Your ministerial status will be no help to preserve you from that declension which is your greatest peril. It is no safeguard to you that you wear the garb of piety, and speak the language of piety, and are busied day by day in the activities of piety. Nay, there is a sense in which these advantages are increased sources of danger. There is a familiarity which breeds indifference, if not contempt. In the wards of a hospital the sensibilities are blunted to suffering ; on the field of battle men overcome their horror of blood. So strangely have we been warped by the fall, that the highest excitements are apt to degenerate into the sensual and the unworthy, just as the fall from the cliff is headlong if there be the false step on its verge. Moreover, as Ministers, you are the subjects of especial assault, because a watchman slain makes the surprise of the citadel more easy ; and you are the subjects of especial temptation, because your fall would be to the adversary an occasion of peculiar triumph. You will not be free from the common allurements which beguile unwary souls. The love of ease, the love of money, the love of applause, the prompting to be selfish,

and censorious, and petulant, and proud ;—all these will beset you as they beset ordinary men ; nay, it may be with fiercer onset, for the dwellers on the mountain shiver in the terror of the blast, when the peasants of the vale are unconscious that the hurricane is roused. Besides these you will have temptations of your own, springing out of your office, in which those around you cannot share. If God gives you success, you will be tempted to elation,—if you labour without visible result, you will be tempted to despond ; if your work is easy, you may yield to spiritual indolence ; if it is difficult, you may suffer it to master you, in spiritual apathy, or vaunt that you can overcome it, in spiritual pride. You must prosecute it amid counteracting influences. Your plans may be thwarted by the opposition of your associates, or by the indifference of your professed friends. Weak men will obtrude their partialities, and timid men will be unreasonably repressive, and narrow men will cherish their prejudices, and ambitious men will make sacrifices to their vanity, and sensitive men must be continually appeased, and crotchety men must be continually humoured. It will be difficult for you to preserve your soul in patience and in the meekness of wisdom. Tempted by the outside enemy and by the inner traitor, tried equally by danger and by duty, with peril lurking both in the heart and in the office, bewildered by the magnitude of the interests committed to your frail guardianship,—nothing will save

you but a continual dwelling under the very shadow of the mercy-seat : a close, constant, strengthening walk with God. Brethren ! be faithful in this matter. Live so near to God that the adversary cannot approach to harm you. Let your ideal be the divine Saviour, who could say, looking calmly upon a world of foes, "The Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." Satan will not enter the house if there be no beckoning eye from the window. Keep your spirit free from all allies of the Evil One, that so, humbly trusting in your Heavenly helper, and baring your heart for Divine scrutiny, you may rejoice to say, "Thou hast proved mine heart, thou hast visited me in the night, thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing ; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress. Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer."

II. *Be Faithful to the Truth.*—You have already testified, before many witnesses, your belief, whole-souled and earnest, of those truths which have been handed down to us from our fathers; and which are hallowed by centuries of toil and triumph. We have a right to expect of you that in this testimony you have made no rash avowal. You have had opportunities, during your years of probation, of becoming acquainted with our system of doctrine, both in the harmony of its strength, and in the power with which its enforcement is attended. You have seen the illustration of the doctrine in the life. It has been the glorying of our

church that, by the grace of God, no doctrinal controversies have disturbed it through the century of its evangelistic labour. We ask of you in confidence that you will not "make" this "glorying void." In the name of your fathers who confide to you their trust unimpaired, in the name of the churches to which you will minister, and whom your heresy might disturb and injure, in the name of the Methodist people to whose taste this word has been sweet, and who cry in hunger of heart—"Evermore give us this bread;" because of the scoffing world, who will acknowledge the moral power of a whole army "valiant for the truth," I ask you to hold fast, and to hold forth, the ancient Word of Life.

There is a necessity for fidelity to the truth especially in times like ours, when every doctrine passes through the crucible, when that which has commanded the veneration of ages is roughly handled by the sciolists of modern thought, and when even those truths on which our dearest hopes repose, are in some quarters fiercely assailed, and in others lightly regarded. Perhaps there never was a time when the enemies of the truth fought with more various weapons, or were animated by a more cruel antagonism. The ancient adversaries return to the charge as freshly as if they had never been beaten; and there are others, more subtle and dangerous, who fight in the army of the aliens, but in the armour which they have stolen from the faithful. You will have to exercise your ministry in the midst of

this luxuriance of error. There will be around you a dark ingenious spirit of unbelief, poisoning the fresh blood of youth, and disheartening the last hope of age ; sometimes, like Herod, coarsely insolent in its impiety ; sometimes, like Judas, betraying the Saviour with a kiss. There will be an earnest, well-disciplined, crafty superstition, restless in its endeavours to regain its ascendancy, marshalling its forces with wonderful skill—holding to its purpose through the patient years with a zeal and devotion which it were well for its opponents to imitate ; but hiding the Saviour in the drapery in which it swathes Him, and hampering the free grace of His atonement by a frail and tangled net-work of its own. There will be a pretentious formalism, denying all connection with Romanism, but quietly doing its work—high in its asceticism, and haughty in its exclusiveness ; a thing of wax-work and symbols, but with a soul of treason to the old Protestant truth. There will be a wide-spread indifference, more fatal than enmity, because it is so intangible that you can no more fight with it than with a shadow ; a spurious liberality, which the tendencies of the age foster, proceeding on the assumption that all religions are alike, and that there is no essential difference between truth and error. There will be the avowed denial of the divinity of Jesus, or of the freeness and fulness of His grace, or of the spirituality of His reign. There will be, as it would seem, a restless and intolerant evangelism, blinding the world and deluding the unwary in the Church

by the utter errors of half-truths, ignoring repentance in its professed exaltation of faith, virtually discrowning the Holy Spirit in its desire to vindicate the human spirit's freedom, substituting an Antinomian apathy for the liberty of the gospel of Christ—running a tilt against the sects, while itself is the straitest and most uncharitable of sects, consistently speaking evil of “system” from its own Babel of disorder, and yet encouraging, ON system, attacks upon all Christian organizations in a spirit more akin to that of “robbers of churches,” than of apostles to a leprous and unhappy world. There will be other forms of various and eccentric error, which it does not need to dignify by a mention ; and you may take it as an axiom that no form of heresy can be too sacrilegious or too silly for the credulity of men. How needful amidst this abounding darkness that the light-bearers should “let their light shine before men.”

Dear brethren, your duty, always imperative, is to-day invested with more solemn obligation, to hold fast, and contend earnestly for, “the faith which was once delivered to the saints.” The ark is not in danger, but it must have well-furnished Levites in its service. While error has its emissaries everywhere, some from barbarous Phrygia, some from scholarly and sceptical Athens, be it yours to abide in the good old paths in which your fathers travelled to Heaven. “Inwardly digest” the truth until it is assimilated to your nature, and enfibred with your every interest and affection. Take your stand, firm, calm, heroic,

by the ancient altar, and from that altar let neither ribaldry nor rationalism expel you. "Be no longer children," except in simplicity; "but in understanding be ye men." Let your faith rest with a child's reliance, and yet with a tenacity strong as the death grasp of a martyr, upon the "truth as it is in Jesus." You must be children of the truth, if you are to be its witnesses. Feeling it in the heart, your faith a living faith, blest with its consolation and hopes, you will withstand the enemies in the gate; and though witlings deride, and scoffers sneer, and cowards basely flee, your resolve will ring out like a clarion in the ears of a world, which your fidelity shall constrain to heed you. "I determine to know nothing among men, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

III. *Be faithful to the Church of your choice, and to your Brethren in the Ministry.*—In the present state of the world and of the minds of men, there must be distinct organizations of believers as well as, and within, the universal church. The central thought, the great necessity of churchmanship is, of course, union with Christ. But human hearts have strong chords of sympathy, by whose inevitable influence like yearns for like, and the believer longs for the companionship of those who are inspired by the same hope, both for mutual benefit, and for the completer outworking of all schemes of holy toil. Hence comes the visible church, existing not so much a mechanical idea, as a social necessity—a supply for that creaturely

want which abhorred the utter loneliness, even in Eden—a realization of the soul's strong instinct of brotherhood. But Christianity is the religion of intellectual freedom—it snaps the fetters alike of social and mental bondage, and secures the right of private judgment unto all. Those who are substantially agreed on the vital points without which Christianity itself could not be, may still have minor, though important differences of opinion. Here again, by the same law, like yearns for like. So comes the denomination, an inner circle within the church, neither unwarranted nor unscriptural, I take it, because it springs out of the genius of Christianity, and is almost a necessary adjunct of a free church life. The denomination becomes harmful only when it cherishes a spirit of exclusiveness or jealousy, and is forgetful of that divinest charity which is “the core of all the creeds.” The talk about absorption is, at best, an amiable dream. The crusade against church organization is at once a folly and a sin.

There is room, I think, for the exhortation to be faithful to the church which you have chosen. I am not so foolish as to claim any exclusive excellence for Methodism. I have no quarrel with other churches. I am catholic enough to wish them God speed, and my co-operation with their work has ever been warm and willing. Each of them, that is faithful to Christ, has its mission from the royal signet, and in the past, each of them has done some work for the world, which no other has

done so well ; but amid an all-embracing generosity, commend me to the man who has a home. You are to minister in the ministry of the Methodist Church. Not in vaunting, but in gratitude we express our conviction that it is "not a whit behind the chiefest." It has a heritage of sound doctrine, and traditions inspiring as the chronicles of ancient kings. It has a theology, broad, well-defined, scriptural, free from all unworthy limitations of the Son's love, free from all disloyal forgetfulness of the Spirit's grace. It has a godly discipline which it knows how to enforce, and which hedges round the enclosures in which its flocks are folded. It has a church order as effective as the most orderly, and a church life as vigorous as the most free. It has, moreover, a wondrous adaptation, not for clan or family, but for all circumstances, complexions, and climes. Unbending, in its woven roots and giant trunk, like the old oak of the forest, it courts the rays of every sunbeam of the heavens, and its branches wave freely in every breeze that blows. Its past is the augury of its future, if it be not traitorous to its heavenly calling. You have a church, therefore, that is worthy to be served by leal-hearted and enterprising sons. Be faithful to it, I charge you. Do not allow it to become the vassal of any but Christ, nor the enemy of any but sin. Work for it as if you were jealous for its honour, and remember that its honour is its fidelity to the Head of the Church in heaven. You have studied its doctrines and

have seen the workings of its polity. You have accorded to it your intelligent preference, and in the face of the world, you testify to-day that you believe it to be the best sphere of toil in all the world for you. Keep to it "until death do you part." Bind yourselves to it with the solemnity and tenderness of a marriage vow. Don't be tempted away from it by the hope of increased respectability, or ease, or gain. Free yourselves from the unworthy littleness which motives like these imply. The prodigals who go off into the far country have sometimes only a brief enjoyment, succeeded by a famine of soul. Wander where you will, you will not find greener pastures, nor stiller waters, nor a more rich and resting influence of God.

Be faithful also to your brethren in the ministry. They are henceforth more to you than common men. They are brothers in effort and affection ; fellow-labourers in the Lord's work ; fellow-heirs of the wealth which the Lord has promised to his children. Hold them in high esteem and honour. Guard their reputation as you would guard personal treasure. Screen them from the attacks of those who would depreciate their usefulness ; ignoble assassins of the character which rebukes their own. Against envy, and malice, and slander, I hope I need not warn you. These base spirits cannot dwell in the temples of the Holy Ghost. But he who is cunning enough to adapt the temptation to the feebleness, sometimes takes advantage of eminence in any special grace to tempt to the committal of the very oppo-

site sin. Thus the meekest man was hurried into unadvised speaking; the hero-heart of Elijah was smitten with a coward's fear; the brave confession of Peter was neutralized by a shameful denial; the loving spirit of John would call down fire from heaven. Watch, therefore, lest in some unguarded moment you sin against the great law of love. Be frank and generous in your admiration of the excellencies of your brethren; leave to others to carp and shrug the shoulder, and damage by the hint of speech or by the hint of silence. No meaner reputation can cling to a minister than that his people should say of him, "Yes! he is able, and might be useful too; but he never speaks a good word of his brethren." Of all churches, the suspicious church will be the least prosperous—just as of all characters the censorious is the most unlovely. Let nothing but absolute wrong-doing destroy your faith in those with whom you associate; and in that case, if discipline is faithfully exercised, you will associate with them no longer. Guard against a bitter, factious spirit of partisanship. Resist, as you value the church's spirituality and peace, anything that would reduce it to a political confederacy, or assimilate its practices to those of political strife. "Be pitiful, be courteous." These are the apostolic expressions of love to the brethren. Cherish that nobility of soul which thinks so much of the Master that it has no time nor room for overweening thought of itself. Do not be quick to imagine personal slights, nor to nurse little

troubles into colossal injuries. The true ministerial dignity is that of a king, to whom it never occurs that any should question his royalty ; or that of a high priest of the temple, secured by a spotlessness and honour which have never known shadow or stain. Oh ! for the times of the old Gospel morality ! “ In honour preferring one another ; ” “ each esteeming the other better than himself ; ” modesty, taking the lowest room at a festival ; self-sacrifice, content to be derided and forgotten ; humility, washing the disciples’ feet ; meekness, “ enduring contradiction ; ” charity, long-suffering, and yet uniformly kind ; pride and anger trampled under the feet, while self-mastery climbs the moral height of forgiveness to a seventy-times-seven offender. Let us have this morality exhibited in the associate heralds of any Church, and their life will make their word a power ; the love in their hearts will flash through the eye and kindle on the tongue ; and as on the banks of the bright Chebar river, in the demonstration of the Spirit in their ministry, men shall see “ visions of God.”

IV. *Be faithful in the great work of preaching to dying men.*—You are to be the Christian Minister everywhere, in the pastorate, in the parlour, in the Sabbath-school,—in the official meeting, in your intercourse with the churches, out in the broad arena of the world ; and there are important duties connected with each sphere of service which you must not allow yourselves to disregard. You must be faithful in that which is least. You are not at liberty to

choose among the commandments. There must be no fragments broken off the table of stone. But I speak to you now in regard to your greatest work,—that which is to be henceforth the business of your lives. I speak to you as Preachers of the Word. In spite of the cavil of the modern Pharisee and the clamour of Sadducean indifference, the Pulpit is yet upon its throne. Amid the strife of tongues, its voice is still commanding. God's witnesses, if they witness truly, will make their testimony felt. The world's conscience is not dead, and as often as the ministering witness speaks in power from without, the accusing or approving monitor is busy with its answer from within. I know there are those who tell us that preaching is an effete ordinance, well enough for the childhood of the world, but outgrown by the culture of its riper years. Brethren! *it is not true*; and, if the preachers do not shame their calling, it never shall be true. Give us the prophet's lips of flame, and the spell-bound listeners shall linger on Carmel still. I want to rouse you to the remembrance of your duty and your privilege. To stand, like the angel in the sun, that you may fling down the healing of his rays; or between the living and the dead, like the priest who stayed the plague; to arouse the sleeping from their slumber, and the dead in sins out of their graves; to bear God's offers,—of reconciliation to the worst rebel, of a child's cleanness to the most loathsome leper, of holiness like that of heaven to the heart set on fire of hell; to lift up the

anointed cross, that whosoever looks may live ; “ in the sight of God to commend yourselves by manifestation of the truth to the conscience of every man.” Oh this is an employment which might well wile a seraph from his brotherhood, and bring the white-robed elders down on swift wings to earth again, low bending before the throne, in acknowledgment of the unwonted honour ! And this employment is yours and mine. God has counted us worthy, putting us into this ministry. Make full proof of it, I charge you, and let your vows of fidelity be sworn upon the altar to-day.

You are to be men of one theme.—The good old term by which our fathers in the ministry were accustomed to call themselves must apply to you, “ Preachers of the Gospel.” All your energies are to be bent towards the understanding, that they may be spent in the exposition, of the Bible. The things which you make in your study must be things concerning the King. You are neither to be philosophers, moralists, rhetoricians, nor critics : though philosophy the subtlest, and morals the most complete, and rhetoric the most telling, and the profoundest criticism, are contained in the message you deliver. You are to be preachers of Christ. If Christ be not in your word, it shall be as the blasted fig-tree on the plain. If Christ be not the all and in all of your utterance ; if every sermon does not savour of Him, lead to Him, glorify Him, there will be leanness in your people’s souls, and you will lie down at last with the consciousness

of wasted labour. Is the world tired, do you think, of the old tidings? Is there any other name before which it will bow the neck of its pride? The apostles might have thought this, when they began in the purple twilight of the Augustan age; Virgil, and Horace, and Cicero were but recent memories; Philosophy had her schools; Art piled up her magnificent creations; Poetry sang in strains of the most rapturous music. What! tell among these, the refined, the scholarly, the high-born, of the Nazarene and the Crucified! Yes, and nothing else! No conciliation to haughty philosophy, no compromise with pagan prejudice, no admission of Jesus amidst the rabble gods of the Pantheon! The apostles were wiser, far, than to commit so fatal an error, and the most stalwart of them all declared with a voice which knew no faltering, and with an eye whose glance swept, like a prophecy, through the centuries to come, "We preach Christ crucified." So must you preach, if you would be wise winners of souls. You are to preach the Gospel of Christ,—not a mutilated Gospel, not a remote Gospel, not a limited and exclusive Gospel. Each of these is another gospel which is not the Lord's; and if you preach another gospel you do so at the peril of a curse which would scathe the human with an agonized immortality, and involve a seraph in a demon's fall. "If we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

You are to be men of one aim.—You are to aim at saving souls. You will be a curse to the Church, not of use to it, if you fail in this. If you are satisfied with a good report, with extensive popularity, with material prosperity, with a replenished treasury, with deep and sustained attention, your estimate of your office is unworthy, and the sooner you amend it the better. An orderly service and a wide-spread fame, but Sabbaths without souls, and years without increase,—How can you bear it? Look beyond the living phantoms whom you call men, and listen to the naked spirit, lost, it may be, through your neglect, as it wails before the Judge on its sad way to doom. “He prophesied smooth things to us, and daubed over our conscience with untempered mortar; he won us, but he did not warn us; we were charmed, but not convinced under his word; he preached himself, not his Master; to be sure he told us of a hell, but he spoke so calmly and pleasantly that we thought there could be no danger; he never burnt into our hearts the sense of guilt and peril. We are lost, and, alas! our minister cared not for our souls.” Brethren, if that accusing voice should fall upon your ears, would you need any other judgment? Would you not sink down abashed and remorseful, as if already blasted by the avenging thunder? My dear brethren, tempt not this complaint against yourselves. Preach so that if some indifferent hearer straggle into the church, he shall be forced, in spite of himself, to say, “This man is in earnest to save my

soul." As to the style of your preaching, I have but little to say. Use the gifts which God has given you, and do not assume the possession, nor strain after the acquirement of those which he has wisely withheld. It would be a sin against God's beautiful variety, to prescribe one ideal for all of you. The brooklet, as it purls and murmurs on its mossy bed, does its work as well as Niagara with its voice of many waters, or the eternal thunder-peal of the triumphant sea. God has ordained equally the zephyr and the hurricane, and in His own modes of working He shakes into conviction the stronghold of the Philippian jailor's soul, and He opens the heart of Lydia to the truth, as the rose-heart opens to the sun. Put your soul into your style, whatever it is, and you will reach other souls by the blessing of God. Of course you will not descend to become pulpit buffoons, nor savage polemics, nor ecclesiastical posture-masters, nor small dealers in literary millinery ; but, according to your cast of mind, you may argue, or expound, or declaim, or depict,—and the power may rush through the argument, or lurk in the calm statement of truth, or leap from the eloquent words into the sinner's conscience, or through the picture melt the penitent to tears. Only aim at soul-saving, and God can bless all styles that are simple and natural ; but if this aim be wanting, you may be masterly in reasoning as Paul, and tender in persuasiveness as Barnabas, and stern in rebuke as Ezekiel, and gorgeous in imagery as Isaiah, and your min-

istry will be soulless and feeble, the sinner's damage, the sorrowing Church's pity, and the worldling's utter scorn. Set this before you, then, as the life-purpose which you are striving to fulfil: "By all means I will save some. I may not be remembered for my brilliancy, for my scholarship, for the possession of commanding gifts or regal mind, but, God helping me, I will lead sinners to Christ; I will join with the penitent when his sighs burst out in song; I will comfort the troubled soul with the consolations of the gospel; I will build up the believer, till his faith is strong as the promises of God; I will warn the wicked of the error of his way; I will deliver myself from the guilt of blood."

If this be your resolve, it is easy to prophesy your future. In one sense it is mercifully hidden from us. We cannot tell who of you will be spared for years of service, and who of you will have his sacrifice accepted in the morning, and be early welcomed and crowned; but your ministry, be it long or short, will be bright and prosperous. You will feel your own helplessness, and will give yourselves continually to prayer. In self-despair you will be driven to a power that is mightier than your own. You will honour the Holy Ghost by seeking His divine baptisms, and he will clothe your word with the unction that is better, as St. Bernard says, "than erudition, or the stores acquired by reading;" constantly realizing the invisible you will preach as in the sight of God. You will have fruit of your labour, so that, like Bunyan, "you shall count that you have goodly buildings and lordships in the places where your children

are born, and you will be so wrapped up in the glory of this excellent work that you will feel more blessed and honoured of God by this than if he had made you the Emperor of the Christian world, or the lord of the glory of the earth without it." Your usefulness will increase with your years, as your experience ripens, and your heart gets nearer heaven. You shall lie down calmly on the death-couch, "blessed of the Master when he finds you so doing," and the highest eulogy of language shall be pronounced over your ashes by those who tell of you to the "generation following." "He was *faithful* unto death."

"Faithful unto death!" Realize it in its fulness of meaning. See, there is a fair-haired lad just come from his mother's smile, and from the companionship of many friends, into the war. The inspirations of patriotism are upon him, and he is set to bear the flag of his regiment. He bears it with holy pride. It is sacred to him as the gage of love. His highest chivalry, his soul of honour, all his care for the present, all his hope on earth, are bound up with the safety of the flag. The battle rages; fast and thick there flies the murderous hail. Many are borne down by his side; closer comes the shock of the charging foe; hand to hand, and hilt to hilt, they wage the deadly strife, but the banner waves aloft, carried in a hand which knows not to relax its hold. Ha! he reels, he falls; that thrust of the bayonet lets out his young life upon the sword; but ere his fingers stiffen he has tossed the torn flag to his comrades, who bear it proudly from the field

and watching its safety, a light spreads over the blanched face, and "fires the glazing eye," and you may catch the last whisper from the hero's lips before they are still for ever : "*I am dying, but I have kept the colours!*" Faithful unto death ! Brethren, God gives you a banner that it may be displayed because of the truth. Through evil report and good report, in the breach and in the battle, you are to bear it. However allured, however frightened, however outnumbered, you are to be "valiant for the truth upon the earth." It is your Captain's order that you keep it, and you dare not let it go. Hurt by the archers, bleeding from many wounds, exhausted with the toil of the conflict, you are still to grasp that banner, that so your latest effort may be to transfer it into other hands, torn, but not dishonored, and to cry, apostlewise, in dying, "I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day." And, thus faithful unto death, the crown shall not be withheld. You shall stand in the joy of a fulfilled mission before God, waited for at the gate by some loving converts who have gone home before you, and as, in meek and thankful humbleness, you give as the account of your stewardship, "Behold I, and the children whom thou hast given me," you shall hear the voice long listened for, whose melody is present heaven : "Well done good and *faithful* servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

ADDRESS TO THE CONGREGATION

ON THE OCCASION OF THE

PUBLIC RECEPTION OF FIFTEEN YOUNG MINISTERS INTO FULL
CONNEXION WITH THE CONFERENCE OF THE WESLEYAN
METHODIST CHURCH OF CANADA,

Delivered in Richmond Street Church, Toronto, on Friday, June 4th, 1869.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,—

I rejoice to meet with you on so interesting and solemn an occasion. You have come in crowds to hear the testimonies of these men who are to be on the Sabbath ordained to the ministry of the Gospel, and who will henceforth be the “messengers of the churches,” and “your servants for Jesus’ sake.” It is right that you should feel interested ; for your own souls’ welfare, and the prosperity of the cause of Christ, are largely wrapt up in the good or evil influence of these men. They have all, originally, received the attestation of the people amongst whom they labored as to their fidelity to duty, their personal experience of truth, so far as man can judge it, and their capability to become well furnished and thorough ministers of the Gospel. Their progressive course has been watched through patient years

of trial, and having finished their probation without reproach, they are to be publicly designated to the fulness of their office by prayer and the laying on of hands. It will be my duty, in connection with that service, to address to their heart and conscience some seasonable truth, as God may put it into my lips : I believe it to be equally my province to remind you—the people—that you have duties towards the ministry of which you cannot rid yourselves, and which it were folly and sin to disregard. If Joshua is to fight manfully with the foe in the plain, if Moses, in his mellow age, is to uplift his princely and prevailing prayer, Aaron and Hur must inspire the warrior's courage by holding up the intercessor's hands. Will you bear with me, therefore, while I endeavour, with all plainness, to urge you to "take heed how you hear," to "esteem" your ministers "very highly in love for their works' sake," and to "look to your selves that they lose not their full reward."

It is of the essence of the constitution of a church that there should be fellowship, sympathy of feeling, mutual regulation and control, and well-adjusted division of labour. There are some things which a minister can do for his people ; but there are other things bearing equally upon their spiritual interests which are beyond his power. He cannot watch and pray in their stead ; he cannot, in their stead, mortify the deeds of the body, nor evolve the radiance of a holy character, nor "keep their tongue from evil, and their lips from speaking guile." *They* must dwell upon the mount

if they would act upon the multitude for good. They must personally have audience of the King if they would be prompt and powerful in His service. They must incorporate the direct rays of the Sun of Righteousness if they would "let their light shine before men." In a word, no solitary duty of Christianity can be done by proxy. It recognizes individual responsibility which cannot be transferred, and claims the personal service of each and all. This is what has been well termed a characteristic of Protestant Christianity. It is not known that there is any other form of religion in the world which has no priests. In our religion there are none; only pastors of the flock—ministers of God to them for good. There is no room for the charge of priestcraft against the Ministers of the Gospel of Christ—for the difference between the priest and the pastor is so radical that they cannot be honestly confounded. A priest offers sacrifice—a pastor points to a sacrifice already offered, one which is complete and abiding. A priest assumes to be a mediator—a pastor relies, both for himself and his people, upon the sole and sovereign mediation of Christ; a priest derives his power over conscience from his supposed knowledge of occult mysteries, from which the people are excluded—a pastor's power over conscience is in direct proportion to the truth which he enforces and reveals; a priest retains the key of knowledge in his own hand, and doles out the treasure to those who propitiate or pay,—a pastor snaps the chain which fetters the Bible in the sacristy,

and bids all the world to search the Scriptures that they may live. In fine, a priest performs religious duties in the people's stead ; it is a pastor's duty to hold up the Divine Pattern, and urge, and admonish, and entreat until "that mind" be in his people "which was also in Christ Jesus." Now there is some danger that the churches which have renounced the theory should in practice subside into the comfortable heresy of priesthood, by leaving the pastor unsupported, and often discouraged, to do all the work of the church.

Brethren,—here is the peril against which I wish to warn you. Hold up your ministers' hands by your generous construction of his conduct, by ungrudging liberality in his support, by willing co-operation with his efforts, by the maintenance of the true brotherhood among yourselves, and by importunate and earnest prayer. In other words, help your ministers to do their work by fidelity in the doing of your own.

In the 134th Psalm, there is a beautiful illustration of this mutual encouragement and blessing. It consists but of three verses, the first two of which are a benediction invoked upon a band of watchers, the last of which is the response of the company to the blessing of the friendly singer. You will understand the tenderness of the salutation. Those who are thus commended in blessing are the Levites who are the guardians of the temple in the night, who watch over its treasures with eyes that do not slumber, and who are careful that the lamps be not extinguished, nor the fire upon the altar of burnt-offering be suffered to die.

The singer is the officer who closes the gates of the temple. As he takes his leave he warbles this song in the night, "Behold, bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which by night stand in the house of the Lord. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord." Soothed and strengthened by the melody, as they address themselves to their patient night watch, they fling back the responsive music,—“The Lord that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion.” The same theory of mutual blessing has a recognition in an interchange of loving greeting which goes on, Sabbath after Sabbath, in the liturgy of the Episcopal Church : “The Lord be with you,” such is the minister’s utterance, “And with thy spirit,”—so do the people respond.

Now it is this, thus illustrated by inspired and liturgical example, that I wish to be exhibited to-day, not in the lips merely, but in the daily outflow of the life. It is by this interpenetration of sympathy between the pulpit and the pew, that churches live and prosper. If you do not recognize your obligations in this matter, your estimate will be unworthy, both of the ministerial office and of your own calling as witnesses for Christ. Unless you are faithful, and sympathizing, and diligent, the zeal and power of the minister will be of scanty avail. There will be fulness in the sanctuary, and leanness in the souls of men. Eloquence like that of apostles may pour from living lips, but it will be as music played among the tombs ; the temple may be crowded, but

it will be with the careless ones to whom the Word "is as a very lovely song, for they hear" the preacher's "words and do them not," and in respect of all the higher purposes of the ministry there will be a catacomb of impurity and death. It is my solemn conviction that you, as representing the laity of the Methodist Church, have its prosperity largely in your own hands, and therefore it is that I am the more earnest in my summons that you be "co-workers" at once with your ministers and their "God."

Be generous in your construction of your ministers' conduct.—Receive them in the name of a Prophet, that you may receive a Prophet's reward. Beware of regarding your teachers as if they were lifted by the office above human infirmity, or screened in some sheltered nook of grace from the blasts of temptation, and from the diverse onsets of evil. They are not angels, but men,—of like passions with yourselves, with the same indwelling frailty, the same weariful impatience, the same traitorous hearts. They are, in all respects, as human as other men, as readily crushed by sorrow, as perversely troubled by waywardness, as urgently claiming, therefore, to be charitably judged. Look into your own hearts, my friends, and think of the conflicts of your Christian experience ; how often your duties have tried you, so that you have forborne to discharge them ; or your hindrances have tried you, so that your strength has fainted by the way ; or your companionships have tried you, so that you have mourned over your cowardice of soul ; and

when these thoughts arise, and these memories are vivid remember that all of difficulty which you feel presses upon your ministers in equal measure, and that there are discouragements in the nature of their work of which you know nothing, but which make their burden heavier to bear. They have resigned, so to speak, a portion of their liberty, that they may be the ministers of God to you for good. Their reputation, their life, are in the church's hands. Guard that treasure which they have in good faith entrusted to your keeping, and let no anxieties destroy their life, nor suffer any slander to whisper their good name away.

Be tender and loving in your judgment of all they say and do. If a sermon seems to you feeble, think how many others have been strong, and how, even from the feeblest and faultiest, you can gather more teaching than you are prepared to carry out into the life. Remember how the aching head, or the deranged digestion, or the bruised and paining nerves, can impart languor to the mind, and shear the spirit of its power. Ask yourselves whether it be not possible that when he entered the pulpit he was ready to preach with vigor and freedom, but he was thrown from his balance by the noisy intrusion of some late comer to the sanctuary, or by the vacant stare of the thoughtless, or the silly laughter of the trifling, or the impatient rustle of the wearied, or, it may be, by the equivocal approval of some slumberer's assenting head. Nay, my friends, do not hesi-

tate to go further. If you are disposed to think that he was not experimental enough, or not clear enough, or not practical enough ; if you complain that there was lack of fire, or lack of food, ask what was your own warmth or your own appetite. You thought him in a sickly condition to preach—are you quite sure you were in a healthy condition to hear? Had your spirit had rest from the week's fitful fever? Could you do more than wash the gold dust from your busy fingers ere you went into the house of the Lord? My friends, there are proprieties of hearing as well as of preaching. If you were all subjected to the same ordeal as your ministers, the examination might not be quite satisfactory ; if you had to remain on probation until you had graduated into proper dispositions for heedful hearing of the word, it might be that there are some even here who would be kept a long time upon trial. Brethren, give me a suspicious, censorious, exacting church—hard, stern, keenly critical—insisting on its tale of requirements like an Egyptian taskmaster, and you have given me the secret of many an apparent failure. Give me a loving, prayerful people, generous in their judgments, considerate in their claims, tardy to censure, frank and hearty to commend, and for such a people any minister whose soul is in his service will “spend and be spent” without ceasing, nor grudge in their behalf, were it necessary, the costly offerings of the life and of the blood.

Be generous in the provision which you make for your ministers.—They have a right to expect this at your hands.

They have foregone the chances and the fortunes of the world, trusting to your faith and honour. The same ability which fits them for their high office, if exerted in other professions, might have made them as wealthy, or perhaps wealthier, than yourselves. The care of the soul is certainly as important, and should be as well recompensed, as the care of the health or the care of the estate. The minister's claim to his stipend rests upon a law of heavenly justice, and it is the same law which regulates the salary of the statesman, the returns of the merchant, and the charity which is rendered to the poor. "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?" asks the assenting apostle. "Yea, but doubtless for our sakes this was written," for as in all labour there is profit, it is the right of every man to live by sweat of brow or brain, and they who preach the gospel, of the gospel have a right to live.

Those who would obey Divine law in this matter will be liberal in the apportionment of the Minister's stipend, and honest and prompt in the payment of it, that he may not be called down from his great work by the comfortless pressure of financial cares; that the diligence which ought to be ceaseless in its study of the Word may not have to exercise itself in maintaining a dubious equality between the winner and the spender; that he may not be forced into an unworthy dependence, destructive of his self-respect, and making his reproofs, which ought to be bold as those of a prophet, languid as the harmless angers of a child.

I would pray the churches, as they value the manliness and spiritual power of their teachers, to lift them above the anxieties of embarrassment; for Hunger is a sharp thorn, and when Want looms upon the soul it is the deadliest and surest of human tempters to evil. If they are sincere men, and chosen of Christ to be his witnesses, they will have trampled out of their hearts the love of money; but they have a rightful claim that a just and liberal reward shall be made to them, not with niggard hand, nor with patronizing manner, by the people of their charge; and He, the Great Master, whose servants they are, has joined in a wedlock, which no man shall dare to annul, the liberality of earth and the bountifulness of heaven. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now *herewith*, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." (Malachi iii. 10.)

Be warm and willing in your readiness to work for Christ, and so hold up your minister's hands.—We cannot too often remind ourselves that spiritual prosperity results not from unaided ministerial or lay endeavour, but from the intelligent and hearty work of the whole church of Christ. It is a fatal error to imagine that all the work is to be done by the minister. If the leader has no followers what avails his generalship in the battle. If an architect cannot find workmen, what hope for the completion of the

building. Though I yield to no man under heaven in my estimate of the office of the ministry, though I would rather have the seal of its baptism on my brow than wield the sceptre of the Cæsars, I fulfil one of its most glorious obligations when I summon every believing spirit to personal service for Christ. That relic of stern and hoary priestcraft, which absorbs all effort in the pulpit, and refuses to admit the partnership of the faithful in the work of saving souls, has no place in the sympathies of the true minister, nor in the heart of the living church. There is for each of you a field of Christian toil, and an awaiting recompense of honour. There is room for the meanest as for the mightiest—for churlish or for royal blood in the warfare for the world, and its victories ennoble both. The child with a linen coat, in whom, though he knows it not, the prophet's spirit slumbers, and to whom in the startled night the summoning voices come; the maid in the Syrian palace, whose charity shone through her bondage, like a star in the thunderous sky; the men of Cyprus and Cyrene, swarthy and honest heralds, who had never sat at the feet of Gamaliel; the fugitives hunted from their homes, driven into exile on the blast of a nation's fear, but who carried the gospel in their souls, and "went everywhere preaching the word;" all these show that each of you who has a heart to work, has the heaven-sanctioned ordination which will warrant you in doing good.

My friends, how is it with you to-day? Have your pastors a valiant army at their back, ready in all daring enterprizes to dare and to do? Perhaps if I could touch you, as with the spear of Ithuriel, I should not discover the energy which befits the soldier. Your fathers did noble things: has the burial ground become richer than the church? You were active and zealous in God's cause, the pastor's most willing helpers, but perhaps that activity and zeal are matters of history now. You have retired from the service, you hardly know why, on the plea, it may be, of business engagements, or fancied infirmities, or advancing years; or in times of abandonment and peril you grew saddened and out of heart—you indulged in the murmuring of the "old man" you had put off, rather than in the trusting of the "new man" you had put on; your effort relaxed just when it should have been strenuous; your prayer became feeble just when it should have been princely; if there were few who assembled to plead for God's blessing, your absence always made them fewer; if the standard bearers have been ready to faint, you were not by to shout their courage back again, to lift the banner from its drooping and stream its glad folds to the wind. If you have embodied the Revelation angel at all, you flew forth with the gospel in fine weather only—your timorous wings were furled in the season of the storm; or perhaps that is not your case; perhaps—

“ You stood the storm when winds were rough,
But in some sunny hour fell off,
Like ships that have gone down at sea
When heaven was all tranquillity.”

You brooded over some real or fancied injury ; your motives were impugned, your efforts thwarted, and angry at your fellows, and fretted from your own calmness, you wandered into the wilderness, and you are useless and solitary now. Brethren, come back and do your first works, and feel your first love. The Lord hath need of you, for the harvest droops for want of reapers to gather it in. The world hath need of you, for it is sick at heart, and longs to be told of Jesus. Your pastors have need of you, that they may house the sheaves into the garner. Don't dwell any longer in that unsightly land of Cabul ; come into the bright Beulah country—it is pleasant to labour there—where airs from the other side of the river fan the wearied brow, and where a thrilling sound of music, as of harpers harping with their harps, reminds you constantly of heaven.

Above all be constant and earnest in your prayers.—You are too well instructed in the things of God to have forgotten that there is no period of a Christian's life in which he ceases from the cry of helplessness, from the invocation of Divine strength, from the expression of vehement desire. If you have thought otherwise you have some humbling secrets to discover by-and-bye. If you think that a cause can be built up by one man's labour in the pulpit, and by

many men's labour in the church, you will find your mistake full soon. Confusion of tongues will be the token of heavenly displeasure, and in the ruin of your prostrate Babel, the vaunt of your Atheism will be seen to be a discarded lie. No wrong can be redressed, no fear dispelled, no sin removed, no sinner saved, without God the Spirit in the fulness of His divine working, and the plênitude of the Spirit is poured out in answer to prayer. You expect your minister to pray. You think you can discover, sometimes, by the vigour or feebleness of his services, the measure of his individual devotion. But is the prayer to be all on one side? Are you under no obligation too? Think you there is no difference felt when you come to the sanctuary with dull face and leaden feet, and when you come straight from the Pisgah summit, with its shinings on your forehead and its fragrance on your breath, and your footsteps glad as when you have pleasant memories of a friend? I tell you here is just the difference between curse and blessing. Give me a praying church, and there will follow the mighty ministry, and startled sinners, and the gracious rain, and the opened and peopled heaven. If the ministers are to preach the truth, and nothing but the truth—if they are to be saved from shallow conceits and questions which gender strife,—if the old gospel is to swell grandly from lips that are strong to speak it,—if, in fine, this longing world shall ever see a Babel reversed by a Penticost, it will be when the feeblest intercessor shall be

even as David, and David as an angel of the Lord, and from each heart and lips of the sacramental host shall swell the bold resolve, "For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth."

Dear Brethren, suffer, I pray you, the word of exhortation in these matters which bear largely upon the welfare of the church. There is a remarkable passage in one of the Epistles of the beloved disciple to which I should like, in closing, to refer you,—“Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.” (2 John, verse 8.) Is not the mysterious truth here indicated, that in some way or other—how and wherefore we know not—there is a connection between the spiritual progress of the people and the fulness of ministerial reward? It would seem to be the doctrine of the Bible that there are degrees of recompense, and official as well as individual approval. Hence we read of a “prophet's reward,” and of a “righteous man's reward,”—of the starry lustre of winners of souls, of the runner's prize, and of the apostle's crown. In this aspect there is something almost melancholy in the aged apostle, the best loved of the Master, condescending to an entreaty like this. Paul, on the verge of the dark river, throbs with holy triumph, hesitates with imperial indifference between longer life and heaven, and speaks exultingly of the fruits of his ministry

as his "hope and joy and crown of rejoicing." John, latest of the band to linger, still breathing the love which he had caught on the Master's bosom, longing, one would think, for a renewal of that intercourse which had once made Galilee a heaven, seems to stop upon the threshold to make sure that by the apathy or treason of his spiritual children, he may not be robbed of one jewel from his crown. Oh, if there be but a possibility of this; if the fulness of ministerial joy can be hazarded in any way by unfaithfulness or by declension, if there be such a strange and subtle affinity between those who teach and those who are taught, that it stretches into the other world—you will not surely add to the multiplied burdens we have already to bear, the fear lest we should suffer by our people's fault, and lest your lukewarm or unworthy attachment should dim the lustre of our ministerial crown.

Brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, spare your Ministers this pain. Help them in their work by the conscientious doing of your own, and let it be our rejoicing hope, as it was that of our honoured fathers in the gospel, that, to the last courses of the sun, Methodism may rejoice in AN EARNEST MINISTRY, sustained by AN EARNEST CHURCH.

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